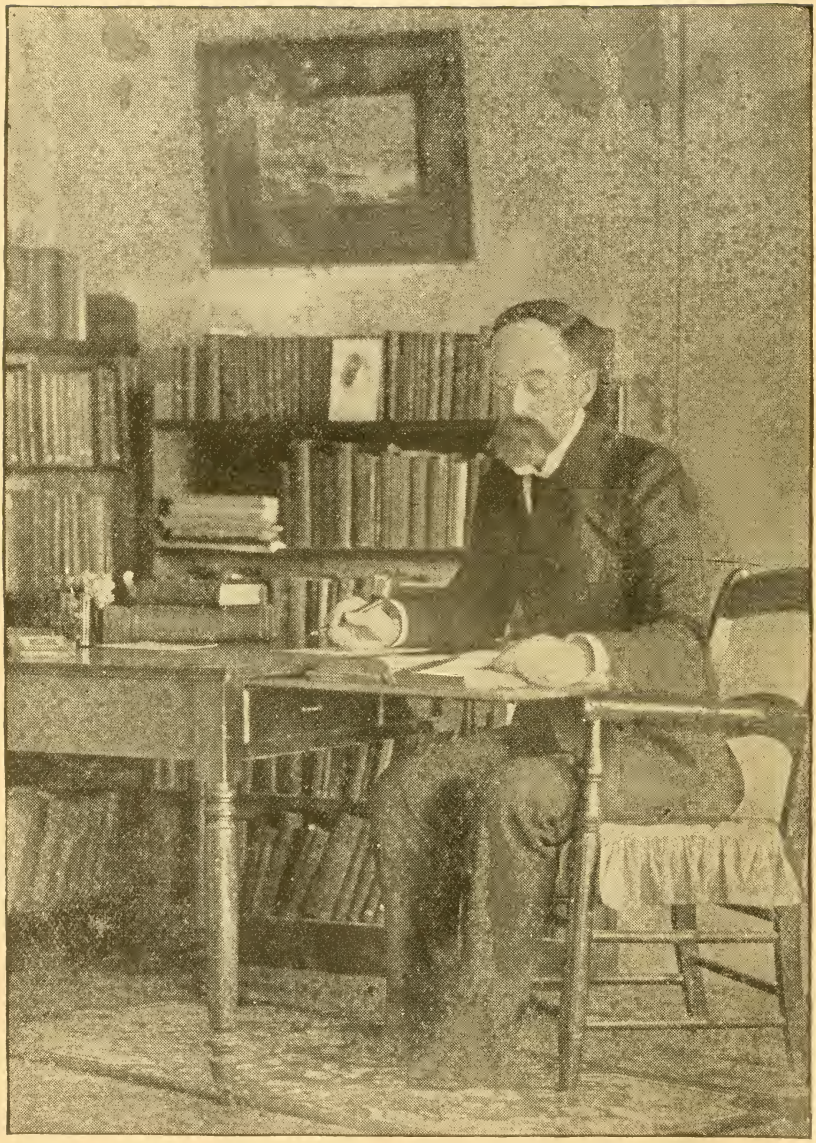
Monday Reveries
..and..
Recollections.

By James H. Skiles.



Monday Reveries
..and..
Recollections.

By James H. Skiles,
Pastor of the Congregational Church, Farragut, Iowa.

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Dedication

I would each poem were a pearl, dear,
And pure beyond compare,
That I might bind them lovingly
About your tresses fair.

I would each poem were a gem, dear,
A jewel rich and rare,
That I might cast them at your feet
And thus my love declare.

But take the little gift I bring, dear,
Although it be but slight:
My words but half express my thought,
Yet you will read aright.

Ministering Women

Mark 15:40-41

When of old the Master journeyed
On the hills of Galilee,
Or beside the coast of Jordan,
Or beside the inland sea.

Oft he grew both faint and weary
Midst the apostolic band,
For he had no household comforts
The dear gift of woman's hand.

Then a group of godly women,
Coming out of Galilee,
Followed him in lowly service
Till he hung upon the tree.

Skillful fingers wrought to please him,
Loving hearts did sympathize,
And his busy life knew comforts
Only women could devise.

Ah, their fame will live forever,
And where'er his name is known
There'll be praise for those who cheered him
When he had no crown or throne.

As of old with the disciples,
So within the church today,
There are those who serve the Master
As a woman can and may.

Ever is her touch most gentle
And her spirit strong and bright,
While she helps us bear our burdens
And in helping finds delight.

Here, today, we crown you, sisters,
With a crown of heartfelt praise:
As of old you served the Master,
So you serve in modern ways.

When the treasury is empty
And the men are sorely vexed,
Then you pray and plan and prosper
And refuse to be perplexed.

When your pastor needs assistance
In the work the church should do,
Then you heed his call for service,
For such calls appeal to you.

When some brother, bowed by sorrow,
Looks on life through bitter tears,
Then to you he turns for comfort,
For the help that soothes and cheers.

Winter's cold chills not your ardor:
You ignore the summer's heat:
In the service of the Master
Faith like yours knows no retreat.

Your best deeds are oft forgotten
And your worth is little known.
But you'll find when life is over
That the Lord still loves his own.

Monday Rest

Winter

Give me a book,
A cosy nook,
And a "Sleepy Hollow" chair:
Then let me read
That I may speed
To a country far and fair,
Where fancy holds the mind in thrall
With charms that never fail,
While we, with Cooper, once more trace
The Red man's hidden trail:
Or, with the Wizard of the North
Tread some far highland vale:
Ah, there a score of friends will come
And each to tell some tale:
So, free from care,
Away I'll fare
To rest me there.

Still on I'll speed
The while I read
In my "Sleepy Hollow" chair,
Still borne along
On wings of song
To a country far and fair,
Where poets of Columbia
Their richest treasures bring;
Where England's sweetest voice repeats
The Idylls of the King;
Where Scotland's bard, by all beloved,
His choicest songs will sing:
Where melody is full and free
As bird songs in the spring:
So, free from care,
Away I'll fare
To rest me there.

Monday Rest

Summer

In a shady nook
I lie and look
At the shadows so cool and deep—
At the shadows under the trees
Where the indolent summer breeze
Is languidly falling asleep:

I look where a beauteous band
Live afar from the world's unrest,
Where, near me, in lovliness dressed,
The dearest of wild-flowers stand:

For the violet yonder grows,
And the bonny blue-bell is near;
There the buttercup blinks, and here,
On this hill, blooms many a rose.

In this shady nook
I lie and look
At the timorous wild-wood folk:
Catch a glimpse of a thrush
Darting out of the brush,
While some blackbirds rest on an oak:

Here the meadow-lark comes ofttimes
And the quail builds her nest anear:
Here the robin calls out, "Good cheer!"
And the bobolink sings his rhymes:

From the brook leaps upward the trout:
The squirrels look down from the trees,
While, nearer than any of these,
The rabbits are running about.

OUR HOME.

In this shady nook
I lie and look
Far up where the summer breeze,
With a softly murmuring sound,
Which whispers and floats around,
Is waving the tops of the trees;

I look up to the deep blue sky
Where each moment a vision brings
Of some bird which, on tireless wings,
Passes swiftly, silently by;

I look up where a cloud, afloat—
A beauteous cloud of white mist
With center of dark amethyst—
Sails by, an etheral boat.

Our Church

Though every place be hallowed ground,
Where good men are expressing
Their faith and love, yet we have found
This church of God a blessing:
For oft we tarry here for rest
When we are worn and weary
Till, free from care, we onward fare,
Nor find the world still dreary.

Oft here our trembling faith grows strong,
While truth all doubt is slaying;
Oft here our hopes burst into song—
The blest result of praying:
So still we'll seek within these walls
Our God, and bow before him,
Since it is sweet for friends to meet
Together to adore him.

A Sabbath Evening Reverie

1891-1901.

Within the church at close of day
(My Sabbath toil is ended.)
In solitude I muse and pray,
By memory attended.

This sacred spot my fancy moves:
(The silence is impressive.)
The past, recalled, all fear reproves,
All care that is excessive.

A quiet hour I'll linger here,
(The daylight is departing.)
For well I know what will appear,
From out the darkness starting.

Soft voices seem to come and go:
(The wind moans in the steeple.)
I hear an echo, faint and low,
As of a host of people.

And still more clearly I discern
(The weary world is sleeping.)
The forms of those for whom I yearn
Who've long been in God's keeping.

A congregation now I see
(Blest gift of retrospection.)
Who, in the past, have given me
Their trust and true affection.

Thus while I muse on scenes long past
I gain new inspiration
To fill the days, now fleeing fast,
With Christlike ministration.

The church of God is marching on:
I'll welcome each new duty:
And, e'er like others, I am gone
I'll clothe my soul in beauty.

When Christ Came to Church.

Once on a time,
Long, long ago,
Sweet bells did chime
And priests did go
Up to their church one Sunday.

And loud they prayed,
And loud they sang,
And then one made
A long harangue
Within that church on Sunday.

Across the wold,
A stranger lame
And weak and old,
At twilight came
Into that church that Sunday.

With lowly mien,
He begged for bread:
The priests, serene,
The old man fed
Within their church on Sunday.

And then, at that—
O wondrous sight!
From where he sat,
Celestial light
Transformed their church that Sunday.

The priests bowed low
In glad surprise,
For all did know,
Though strange the guise,
Whom they had fed that Sunday.

They cried, "O Lord,
We do entreat,
With one accord,
That thou wilt meet
With us in church each Sunday.

All legends say—
And none protests—
That, from that day,
A glor rests
Upon that church each Sunday.

This story old
To me doth say,
"When love grows cold
Do not delay
To meet with Christ on Sunday."

In modern life,
Full oft we bear
Some marks of strife
Or marks of care
Into our church on Sunday.

Thy glory, Lord,
No longer hide:
And this accord:
Whate'er betide,
Still meet with us on Sunday.

Prayer.

What is prayer, my brother, tell me?
What is prayer?

"'Tis the trustful heart's expression
Of its hopes and fears:
'Tis the story of transgression,
Told with shame and tears:
'Tis a plea for God to guide us
All along our way,
And for grace to still provide us
Help from day to day."

Is then all we seek in prayer,
Pardon and release from care?

"Nay. 'Tis oft the heart's outpouring
Of its wealth of love,
While, by faith, the spirit, soaring,
Dwells with God above;
'Tis all trouble's transmutation
Into perfect peace:
Tis a Godward aspiration;
'Tis the soul's release."

A Scholarly Preacher.

(With all necessary apologies to Tennyson's Owl.)

The men are busy in the town
With sweat of brow and toil of brain
They all work hard for earthly gain,
Though some may smile and some may frown;
But,—
Alone and nursing his five wits
The preacher in his study sits.

The mothers of the selfsame town
Are seldom free from household care;
Though some few heavy burdens bear,
And some deserve a martyr's crown;
Yet,—
Alone and nursing his five wits
The preacher in his study sits.

The children of the busy town
Oft need to hear the voice of friend
Rebuke, encourage, or commend,
Lest some temptation drag them down;
Still,—
Alone and nursing his five wits
The preacher in his study sits.

He dwells within the busy town
But, like a monk, he dwells apart:
Ere from his books he must depart
He hopes to win a fair renown:
And so,—
Alone and nursing his five wits
The preacher in his study sits.

All day he hides among his books,
Communing with the good and great:
From where he lives in peaceful state
On toiling men he seldom looks:
For,—
Alone and nursing his five wits
The preacher in his study sits.

He shrinks from tales of human joy,
Much more for tales of bitter tears:
He cares not for the plans and fears
Which common hands and hearts employ:
For still,—
Alone and nursing his five wits
The preacher in his study sits.

Ah, preacher of the word of God,
Flee not the tumult and the strife:
The lowly walks of common life
Thy Lord himself has often trod:
For,—
He never in his heaven sits,
Alone and nursing all his wits.

A Preacher's Dream.

A preacher sat in his study;
He was weary and ill at ease;
His sermon long had detained him,
Yet he feared that it would not please.

He knew that the people were cultured;
Some were wiser by far than he,
For there were teachers and lawyers
And some others of high degree.

He thought of standing before them
With a message they might disdain;
For, Oh! the truth was so wondrous,
And his sermon so crude and plain.

And while he sat there, thus thinking,
On his eyes broke a vision bright;
He saw, within it, unfolding,
A rich glory of wondrous light.

And still it grew and unfolded—
That strange glory both deep and broad—
While, to and fro, in his vision
Swept the sound of the praise of God.

And loud and louder the music
In rich harmony rose and fell,
While bright and brighter the glory
Wove around him its mystic spell:

Till, from that vision supernal,
Came the voice of the Lord to say,
"Arise, and go as my servant;
I will teach thee to preach and pray."

And, lo, the voice of the Master,
Who abides in celestial light,
So thrilled that preacher with rapture
That it put all his fears to flight.

And then the vision receded:
It grew faint in both tint and tone;
The dreamer woke from his dreaming—
In his study he sat alone.

Yet oft he thinks of that vision—
Of that glory both deep and broad—
And feels he serves as have others,
In the very presence of God.

Today the learned all praise him,
For he speaketh the word they need;
The poor and lowly all love him,
For he helpeth in every deed.

The Wise Deacon.

The gloomy wintry day was o'er
And stormy was the night,
But in the house across the way
The fire glowed warm and bright,
And there the de con sat alone
With his beloved gramophone.

Within the spell of that machine
All troubles were forgotten,
For mystic powers, as of old,
Of music were begotten.
The good man's brain had ceased to throb,
His bones had ceased their aching;
He was like one who sleeps and dreams
And not like one who's waking.
O, happy deacon! there alone
With your beloved gramophone.

The cares of life would come again
When slowly dawned the morrow.
For none can ever quite escape
Life's common toil and sorrow:
But wise is he who has the knack
Of casting off all care
And speeding far to peaceful scenes—
His palace car a chair.
'Twas thus the deacon sat alone
With his beloved gramophone.

At Cana.

Recall the tale
How the wine did fail
At Cana, at the marriage-feast:
How the Lord that day,
In his own kind way,
The scanty store of wine increased.

Ah, wonderous power!
Without fruit or flower,
The limpid water changed to wine:
And the wine so made
Without nature's aid
Excelled the product of the vine.

For what occurred?
How reads the Word?
"Behold!" the ruler, smiling, cried,
"This last-drawn wine,
I do opine,
Is best of all thou dost provide."

In youth's glad day,
So bright and gay,
Life is a bountiful repast:
And yet, I say,
'Tis God's good way
To keep the best until the last.

Then let the years
Bring smiles and tears,
Bring days of peace and days of strife,
Away with fears!
For heaven nears
And richer grows the wine of life!

Mary and Martha.

By the side of the Lord stood Martha of old,
And she brought him the best of her store:
Thus for years she had served the dear Lord who deserved
All her wealth, all her service, and more.

At the feet of the Lord sat Mary of old
And her spirit, though loving, was still,
For some wonderful word, which he spake and she heard,
Through the depths of her being did thrill.

Very dear to the Lord was the gift of the hands
But yet dearer the gift of the heart
And, though Martha served well, yet did Mary excel,
For He said that she chose "the good part."

A Child's Appeal.

My little lad, you seem perplexed:
Your merry heart, I fear, is vexed:
Shall I not help you with your task?
With sparkling eyes he turned to ask,
"O, will you be my 'friend-mate?'"

Your "friend-mate," dear? Indeed I will:
For you I'll use my utmost skill:
And yet the task's not hard to do
Except for little lads, like you:
And I will be your friend-mate.

Dear Lord, before thy face I bow,
A child, and oft perplexed: but Thou
Are not confused by human strife,
Nor wearied by the cares of life:
Wilt Thou not be my friend-mate?

The task, so great, so hard, for me,
Is neither hard nor great for thee:
O elder brother, more than man,
I'll do my task—I only can—
If Thou wilt be my friend-mate.

"Peace, peace," saith Christ, "Why shoulds't thou fear?
I've called thee friend, and I am near."
Life's pathway shines before me bright;
I'll serve my God and do the right
Since Christ is e'er my friend-mate.

Immortality.

"That solemn hour in which, for those who have gone before and for us who are to follow, the eye of sense beholds naught save the ending of the world, the enterance upon a black and silent eternity, the eye of faith declares to be the supreme moment of a new birth for the disenthralled soul, the introduction to a new era of life compared with which the present one is not worthy of the name."

John Fisk in "Life Everlasting."

Since death is but a second birth,
From immortality on earth
The Lord delivered us.
Though age is near and youth is far,
We murmer not, for now we are
Content to have it thus.

We greet the years as they fly fast
To mingle with the mighty past—
We greet them with a smile.
Our years are few and soon we'll be
Rejoicing in eternity,
So we can wait awhile.

Amid our earthly toil and care,
Some heavy burdens we must bear
We cannot understand:
But, as we slowly onward plod,
We rest upon the arm of God,
Who's always near at hand.

In dreams, a feast their hopes provide
For travelers o'er deserts wide
Beneath the starry dome;
And so our faith now makes us rich
While, night by night, our tents we pitch
A day's march nearer home.

We know our God and will not fear
Though one by one should disappear
The friends who make life sweet:
To greet them not, 'tis sadly strange—
But, in that land where comes no change,
We all, once more, will meet.

Spiritual Companionship.

Alone we seem to walk through life,
Yet are the angels near us:
And, in the hour of pain or strife,
All lovingly they cheer us.

If day or night we are afraid,
We know they are beside us:
For they are sent to lend us aid
Whatever may betide us.

Amid the world's confusing din
They silently direct us:
And when we falter, fighting sin,
They mightily protect us.

They come unseen our steps to guide,
E'en from our life's beginning;
From day to day they still abide
To save us all from sinning.

From year to year they persevere
In seeking our salvation,
Till we, by grace, before God's face,
Become a new creation.

Shall angels thus abide with us
From evil to preserve us,
While friends from earth of human birth
Forbidden are to serve us?

They are not seen and yet, I ween,
No power from them can cleave us:
With well-known skill, from some sore ill,
O oft they do relieve us.

We cannot hear their words of cheer
Yet well we know their message,
For oft we feel an impulse steal
Upon us, like a presage.

They are not dead! They have not fled!
They tarry to uphold us:
With thoughtful eyes and whispers wise
Their arms in love enfold us!

"Not Angels, But Folks."

We are told that when "Father Taylor," the celebrated sailor missionary, of Boston, lay dying a friend reminded him that angels were present and that he soon would see them. The dying man aroused himself and replied, "I don't want angels, I want folks!"

John Fiske, in "Life Everlasting," says, "We are all agreed that life beyond the grave would be a delusion and a cruel mockery without the continuance of the tender household affections which alone make the present life worth living."

You tell me when I come to die the angels will draw near
To bear my spirit home to God, and thus you seek to cheer;
You tell me they are bright and fair, and mighty to protect
Through changes strange and journeys far, the souls of God's elect:
You tell me they are waiting near to bear my spirit home

To that far land of life which lies beyond the starry dome;
You tell me that forever there with angels I'll abide,
And never more will sorrow come nor any death betide;
But, oh! my spirit longs to know, as nears the parting hour,
If death will break the bonds of earth and rob our love of power.
The mystic stream is wrapped in mist; I cannot see across;
If there my friends are mine no more, how can I bear the loss?
So tell me not of angels fair in this my hour of fear,
Although they've come at God's command and now are waiting near;
But tell me of the friends I love: all other speech forbear;
Oh tell me of the friends I love! Will they not meet me there
Within that land where death comes not and partings are no more?
Shall we together live for aye upon the further shore?
Shall we together praise and serve the God whom here we love?
He gave us to each other here—will he do so above?
I soon must speak my last farewell—is it forevermore?
Or shall we meet and greet again upon that further shore?
Sad spirit, bid your fears depart nor fear to trust your God:
Recall how Jesus loved his friends while here on earth he trod.
He loved His friends as you love yours; He loved them to the end;
He understands your cry of fear; you shall not lose one friend.

For He created human love which binds us heart to heart
And, though He may let sorrow come, will ne'er keep us apart.
True love is an immortal thing, it will not, can not die;
So rest in peace and trust your God; all will be well on high.

"The Beat'nst Plan."

A few years ago, a plan popularly known as the "Beaton" plan for the relief of our home missionary treasury, was widely discussed. This plan proposed that each small country church should purchase a few acres of land, adjoining the parsonage, for the use of its pastor. It was argued that by cultivating this land he could lessen his expenses and increase his income and thus bring the greatly longed-for relief to the home missionary treasury.

This plan will beat the preacher,
Whatever he may do;
'Twill beat him in the pulpit
And in the market too.

'Twill beat him in the study;
'Twill beat him in the field;
For neither brains nor acres
Will give a half a yield.

The corn will beat the sermon,
The sermon beat the corn,
And both will beat the preacher—
The preacher all forlorn.

But "how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,"
As lowly farmer-preacher,
Apostle of the clods?

Ah, yes, 'twill beat the preacher—
Those acres half a score—
And all for want of money
From wealth's abounding store.

O, men with gold and silver,
Your brother needs your aid.
It is a waste of manhood
To change the pen for spade;

It is a waste of manhood
To hoard today your gold,
When fields are white to harvest
And victories foretold.

God gives to each his talents;
To every man his work:
The preacher will not falter;
Beware you do not shirk.

Our Gift to Old Cathay.

The last farewells were spoken
And then they sailed away
Far out upon the ocean
Toward the shores of old Cathay.

O bright the sun above them,
And bright the sparkling spray,
For, after years of study,
They'd soon be in Cathay.

Some found the ocean voyage
A dreary, weary way;
They smiled and said to others,
"How near seems old Cathay."

Full soon their journey ended
And there, one gladsome day,
Began, with hearts o'erflowing,
Their work for old Cathay.

The years brought toil and burdens
And happier still grew they,
For years of service deepened
Their love for old Cathay.

But now our hearts are heavy
For there one dark, dark day,
They fell before the heathen—
Our gift to old Cathay.

Ah, sorely, sorely, miss we
The two who sailed away:
So gladly, blithely, left us
For the sake of old Cathay.

The Orthodoxy of Today.

Some theologians of the past—
Or so we read in history—
Such hosts of proof-texts had amassed,
They bowed before no mystery.

Some dogmas of the early days
Were far beyond all reason,
While serving God in untried ways
Was little less than treason.

Some mighty conflicts once were fought—
By men of high ambition—
To prove by whom God's word was taught
According to tradition.

Once men accepted as the truth
Whate'er old age did hallow,
For folly still abode with youth
And all new views were shallow.

By its decrees and creeds, the church
All fields of truth had covered;
Then who but fools would fondly search
For what had been discovered?

Once Godly men were oft contemned
For hopes we all now cherish,
While heretics were oft condemned
For strange beliefs to perish.

Once all men found within their creeds
Their making or undoing,
While courts recked not of Christlike deeds
Or mercy's gentle wooing.

Today we humbly own that truth
Is often clothed in mystery,
And comes at times in garb uncouth—
Or so we read in history.

No scorn have we for those who doubt;
No hate for men mistaken;
If but their spirit be devout,
And evil ways forsaken.

We still believe that since God spake
Through men whom he inspired,
The "way of life" none can mistake
If that's what is desired.

In modern phrase, some write their creeds,
And some express theirs quaintly;
In either case we ask for deeds
To prove that men are saintly.

For theologians are but men
And oft have been mistaken;
So heretics we call them when
The Godly life's forsaken.

The orthodoxy of the heart,
With richest blessings pregnant,
In church, and home, and busy world
Today is plainly regnant.

Ideals.

His greatest vision no man can paint,
For, while hands grow weak and spirit faint,
His conceptions mock his skill;
Though long he work and with keen desire,
Though fame may beckon and love inspire,
Yet his dream eludes him still.

His grandest sermon no man can preach,
For it's far beyond the power of speech
To interpret mind and heart;
Since words are weak and the tongue is slow,
Of both his thought and his spirit's glow
But a hint can he impart.

His sweetest carol no man can sing,
Though he pray for skill to make it spring
Like a lark upon the air;
As a bird that fears it may be caught,
It hides in the thickets of his thought
Where he hears its voice so rare.

A true man strives but he often fails,
And, though neither toil nor prayer avails
To attain his heart's desire,
Yet will he not, though he may bow low,
His highest, holiest, hope forego
While his heart bids him aspire.

Influence.

A pebble I give to the ocean wide;
As it sinks from my sight,
How I wish that I might
Now journey afar with its wavelets as they
To the coasts of all countries go circling away.

I speak a kind word to a friendless man;
Ah, the gift is but small,—
"But a breath," is that all?
No word can be lost in the gulf of the past;
The results it achieves will forevermore last.

I utter a prayer for a child in pain;
Soon the prayer dies away,—
"But a wish," shall I say?
No prayer can be lost mid earth's turmoil and strife,
For all prayer is endowed with perennial life.

My service I give to the world today;
Though the gift may be small,
Yet I gladly give all,
For that which we fully and freely now give
In the hearts of our fellows forever will live.

Brotherhood.

I sit in a quiet corner
And watch the crowd go by
With a whirl and a rush,
With a push and a crush;
And would I be in it?
Not I!

And still from my quiet corner
I watch the crowd go by
With a cry and a groan,
With a wail and a moan:
And who brings it comfort?
Shall I?

No more from a quiet corner
I'll watch the crowd go by,
For I'm off in the rush,
In the midst of the crush.
To live for my brothers:
Good bye.

The Real and the Ideal.

Ask me not to pause or wander,
Ye who love the real,
While up to the hill top yonder,
Beckons my ideal;

For I seek—will you receive it?
As you do, the real;
Though, by faith, I now perceive it
As my fair ideal.

Our lives, dear Lord and Master,
Thine evermore shall be:
To work, or fight, or suffer,
As seemeth good to thee.

Every cloud has a silver lining,
If we could only see it;
Every life has a high ideal,
If we would only be it.

OUR CHURCH.

Houses and Homes.

The walls of a house may be builded of wood,
Its foundation of brick or of stone;
But a genuine home is an exquisite thing,
For it's builded of heart-throbs alone.

The price of a house may be reckoned at once,
And be paid with a handful of gold;
But the price of a home very few can compute,
And that price they have never yet told.

The rooms of a house may be stately and grand,
Their adornment a triumph of art;
But all beauty of home is the final result
Of the toil of an unselfish heart.

A house may be burned, may be sold or exchanged,
Nor the loss with one's peace interfere;
But the loss of a home—how it crushes the heart!
For our homes we all love and revere.

Of houses, a man may possess many scores,
Yet his poverty lead to dispair;
While an honorable man, in a home of his own,
Must be counted a true millionaire.

A Journey Home,
or
The Quest of Pleasure.

For years I had searched for pleasure
And had never ceased to roam,
But my heart at length convinced me
That my quest should lead me home.

So, one clear cold day in winter,
To strange scenes I bade good-bye
And sought the home of my childhood
Which lay 'neath a southern sky.

Full many a day I journeyed
O'er fields deep-covered with snow
And o'er the plains where the cactus
And the lowly sage-bush grow,

Till I came upon a valley
Where all was forlorn and dead,
Tho' far in the west lay cities
Built of purple, gold and red.

While far to the south were highlands
With peaks of mountainous height,
Whose crests, snow-capped by the winter,
Were resplendent in the light.

And still, as I journeyed southward
Across that valley forlorn,
In the sky was rarest beauty
Though the earth had scarce a thorn.

And when in the west the glory
Grew dim in the ev'ning sky
Like a thousand thousand candles
All the stars came out on high.

Said one, "We have crossed the valley
And the hills are near at hand."
Then I thought, "Not far beyond them
Breaks the waves upon the strand;

And there, where the ocean's murmur
Is an anthem sweet and low,
'Mid a sea of orange-blossoms,
Stands the home I long for so."

The earth grew darker about me,
The stars shone brighter above,
And I fell asleep, while thinking,
And dreamed of the home I love.

When they called me in the morning
We had crossed the mountains o'er,
And the freshness of the springtime
Was the garb the whole earth wore.

O sweet was the air with fragrance,
For flowers were everywhere:
My heart was light as the heart of
A child, for my home was there.

Ah, blessed was that home-coming
At the dawning of the day,
And sweet was my true love's greeting,
"You have now come home to stay."

Then my heart was filled with pleasure,
Though my lips, through joy, were dumb;
For, there, in the early morning,
The end of my quest had come.

The Retired Farmer.

An old man sat in his easy-chair;
And happy was he
As happy could be,
For his heart was light
And his spirit bright,
And he did not have a care.

At peace he sat in his easy-chair;
While near at his side,
The crown of his pride,

Sat the woman who,
All his long life through,
Had e'er helped him to do and dare.

"My son," quoth he, "here, beneath the trees,
I've oft told you how,
By sweat of your brow,
You must till the soil
Till, by patient toil,
You have earned your hour of ease."

"But, son," quoth he, "e'er the daylight flees,
Seek wealth that endures
And hope that matures
When the daylight fails,
And no help avails
To prolong your hour of ease."

And still he sat in the cool fresh air,
Till, sinking low,
The sun did throw
On the western sky
Its daily good-bye:—
Then he slept in his easy-chair.

And there he sleeps underneath the trees.
E'er night had begun
His day's work was done.
O, his faults were few,
And his heart beat true,
For a nobler manhood one seldom sees.

And oft I think of him sitting there
And greeting the night
With spirit so bright.
When he fell asleep,
In repose so deep,
I scarcely could weep—
When he died within that chair.

Entering The Harbor.

O deep is the blue of the evening sky
Where a light fleecy cloud floateth slowly by,
And the world is as still in this hour of rest
As a babe fast asleep on its mother's breast,
For the wind went down with the sun.

At dawn came a tempest from out the east,
And its force and its fury each hour increased:
But the tempest passed by and the world had rest
When the sun sank from sight in the glowing west,
For the wind went down with the sun.

Tonight I am watching beside a friend
While the day of his life draweth near its end.
For long years he was driven and tempest-tossed
Like a ship in a gale which is almost lost—
But the wind went down with the sun.

Tonight, for my friend, there is peace at last,
For his moments are numbered and flying fast.
In the harbor the waves sing about each prow,
And he's just at the mouth of the harbor now
When the wind goes down with the sun.

In the day when thou art weary,
Burdened with life's toil and care;
When thy path is lone and dreary,
And no sunshine shineth there;
Then to Jesus turn and pray
And he'll cheer thee on thy way.

Two Pictures of a Saint.

At the Window.

Our grandma was knitting—
Sitting and knitting—
When the spirit of dreaming came o'er her,
And the scenes of her youth came before her.
Now are idle her fingers,
While with pleasure she lingers
Amid scenes of a far distant day,
And with friends who are far, far away.

Today it is snowing—
Blowing and snowing—
And the short wintry day is so dreary,
And the world of the cold is so weary,
That I long for the coming
Of the days of the humming
Of the bees, and the scent of the rose,
And the calm summer evening's repose.

But grandma is dreaming—
Seeming, while dreaming,
To be far from this wintry day's storming;
While the pictures her fancy is forming,
By each welcome presentment,
Bring an added contentment
To the heart which still bears its full share
Of life's wearisome labor and care.

All day she's been knitting—
Sitting and knitting—
And the smile and the words which endear her
To her children and all who come near her,
Have allayed all repining;
While her spirit, entwining
Round our hearts with a loving constraint,
Has revealed her once more as our saint.

In The Garden.

Beside an odd, old-fashioned garden,
Lives a friend whom I call a saint:
Although, like the flowers you see there,
She may seem very queer and quaint.

But there is peace within that garden,
With its pinks and its marigolds,
For, hark! how the birds are all singing,
And not even the blue-jay scolds.

Sometimes we walk that path together—
That path by the tall hollyhocks—
Till my heart is as free from worry
As that lily the breeze now rocks.

Ah, how I love that odd old garden,
And that peaceful, trustful, old saint,
Who so often talks of God's goodness
And yet never makes a complaint.

Her tranquil faith in God is constant
As the stars which shine up above:
And, after a talk in her garden,
Then I too can rest in his love.

I know her flowers are old-fashioned
And her manners queer and quaint:
But I'm glad that when cares annoy me
I can walk and talk with a saint.

The Bells of My Childhood.

The bells of my childhood,—
I hear them still ringing
When memory wakens
And backward is winging
Its flight to the days
Where the summer delays:
Once more, while I muse,
Half-awake, and yet dreaming,
The scenes of the past
Before me come streaming.
O memory's sweet bells! O childhood's sweet bells!
Ye come like an angel who trouble dispels.

The bell on the school house,—
I hear it now ringing,
While youth o'er the landscape
A glory is flinging,
And fancy runs fast
Far into the past:
O loudly tonight,
With hearts that are swelling,
We hark to the tales
Its clamor is telling.
O memory's sweet bells! O childhood's sweet bells!
How loudly tonight your melody swells!

A harsh bell is clanging
And breaks on my dreaming:
Its clamor and banging,
Though only in seeming,
Recalls a great fire,
Rising higher and higher:
Once more I'm a boy,
And, dignity spurning,

I rush to the place
Where buildings are burning.
O memory's sweet bells! O childhood's sweet bells!
The tumult of life your echo now quells,

The sleigh-bells of winter,—
I hear their gay jingling,
While fair cheeks are glowing
And fingers are tingling:
But, though the winds blow,
We rejoice in the snow:
Tonight each bright eye
Is merrily shining,
While hope round each heart
Is lovingly twining.
O memory's sweet bells! O childhood's sweet bells!
All fear from my heart your jingling expels.

The bells of the steeples,—
Once more they are swinging
And over the valley
Their melody, ringing,
Recalls the dear ways
Of the old Sabbath days:
How sweetly each bell,
From out its own steeple,
Re-echoes God's grace
And love for his people.
O memory's sweet bells! O childhood's sweet bells!
What stories of joy your harmony tells!

The bell in one steeple
Is now slowly tolling,
And over the valley
The sad tidings rolling
Of hearts bowing low
With a burden of woe:

Look up, stricken ones,
And cease from your weeping:
Christ rose from the dead,
And we're in his keeping.
O memory's sweet bells! O childhood's sweet bells!
Release from all troubles your music foretells.

The Castles of Youth.

Oft I've seen in my travels
Many buildings uncouth,
But today I've been thinking
Of the castles of youth.

In the sky I've seen cities—
Which no longer exist—
Which were built at the dawning
Out of sunshine and mist.

So the glow of life's morning
O'er the world the light flings
And, behold, a great castle
From the earth quickly springs.

But it fades from the vision
E'er the day is far spent,
And we turn to our dwellings
In prosaic content.

Ah, our hopes were once glowing
And our future was bright
When we dwelt in those castles
With their beauty bedight,

Where our feasts were so dainty
And our pleasures so rare
And each loving companion
Was so witty and fair,

That the moments flew past us
  Like a bird in swift flight
Till our castles all perished
  Like a dream of the night.

Added years bring new lessons
  From the world's treasured lore,
But the loss of youth's castles
  We will always deplore.

And tonight I've been longing
  For my lost youth again
That my fancy might lead me,
  As it often did then,

Far away from all burdens—
  To a dreamland, forsooth—
Where I'd rest and refresh me
  In the castles of youth.

The Maiden of '82.

She's only a little maiden
  Of the class of '82,
But dainty and sweet, and graceful and neat,
  To the tip of her tiny shoe.

This morning I failed in each lesson
  But what, oh, what, can I do?
Whatever I read, I can only heed
  That maiden of '82.

The teacher may scowl and continually growl,
  But I see no help. Do you?
Unless they remove, which I could not approve,
  That maiden of '82.

Some day I'll propose for she's sweet as a rose,
And her heart, I'm sure, is true;
And white as the snow is the soul, I know,
Of that maiden of '82.

Her eyes are bright as the stars of night,
And they're deep as its deepest blue;
They twinkle with fun, and then I'm undone
By that maiden of '82.

Her eyes elude every glance that's rude,
But I've found them loving and true;
As bright as a dream, their depth is extreme,
Their beauty supreme, when love is our theme—
Dear maiden of '82.

L'envoy.

(20 Years Later.)

And now for life she is my wife,
For she let me win as well as woo;
And I still admire my boyhood's desire,
The maiden of '82.

MY BABY.

My Baby.

In his love so deep and tender
God makes good things to abound,
But a sweeter little blessing
Than my baby I've not found.

When we're gathered round the hearth-stone
And the lamp is burning bright,
Then to have a romp with papa
Fills him with supreme delight.

There's a magic in his manners
Makes my old heart young and gay,
While he chatters like a magpie
In a most enchanting way.

When his bed time hour approaches
And his eyes are heavy grown,
He will whisper, "Now some 'tories,"
In a low and sleepy tone.

Then within my arms he'd cuddle
In contentment most profound,
And a sweeter little blessing
Then my baby I've not found.

When I hear sharp voices striving,
In the mart and on the street,
How I wish all men had voices
Like my baby's low and sweet.

O, the jar and fret of commerce!
O, the noises, loud and shrill!
What relief comes in the twilight
When you all are hushed and still!

Then this world's once more an Eden,
And my home its brightest spot
When I hear my baby talking—
Rarer music earth knows not.

Yes, I've known many pleasures.
And today they still abound;
But a sweeter little blessing
Than my baby I've not found.

By the River.

We sat beside the river
One peaceful summer day,
And casting leaves on the water
We watched them float away.

The current, onward flowing,
Soon swept them out of sight:
We smiled, and said, "What an emblem
Of time's unceasing flight!"

But our hearts were light and throbbing
With love and hope and youth:
And, though we talked of the emblem,
We did not feel its truth.

So hand in hand we sat there
That peaceful summer day,
Nor knew that our happiest moments
Were slipping fast away.

Today I sit here gazing
Upon some floating leaves
While sorrow, round and about me,
Its spell of fancy weaves.

The emblem—leaves and river—
Too well I long have known;
For oft I muse by the waters
In silence and—alone.

Laughter.

I laughed with the woman today
To whom I have given my love:
And, behold! below and above,
The heavens grew light,
And the earth grew bright,
E'er the sound of our mirth died away,
When I laughed with the woman today
To whom I have given my love.

I laughed at the woman today
To whom I had given my love;
But, alas! as swift as a dove,
Which flies in great fear
When it sees danger near,
So my love, at the sound, fled away
When I laughed at the woman today
To whom I had given my love.

Sunshine.

I see from out my window,
A dozen times a day,
A merry little maiden
Beneath the trees at play.

Her hair is like the sunshine—
So yellow and so bright—
It glows within the shadows,
And glistens in the light.

Her eyes are full of laughter,
Her lips are rosy red,
And in each childish motion
Sweet grace and beauty wed.

Her sister calls her "Dolly;"
Her mother, "Daughter mine;"
While I, her father, whisper,
"God bless my sweet 'Sunshine!' "

Songs of the Night.

In the gloom of the long sleepless night,
When the light
Of the stars is enwrapped in a shroud
Of black cloud,
Then I say to my heart,
"Do not start
In affright; do not fear:
God is here."

In the night when by sorrow oppressed
And distressed,
Oft I sing some sweet song of the night,
Though no light
In the heavens doth glow,
For I know
That the Lord doth abide
At my side.

MY BOY.

An Outing With My Boy.

When work becomes a burden
And little things annoy,
There's nothing quite so restful
As an outing with my boy.

We leave the world behind us
And wander far away
From all that would remind us
Of anything but play;

We talk of birds and fishes,
Of flowers and of trees;
We go where fancy wishes
As free as any breeze;

We seek the flowing river,
For all boys like to wade;
We watch the sunbeams quiver
In nooks of light and shade;

We hear the squirrels chatter
Away up in the trees,
While birds about us scatter
Their chirps and songs of ease;

But when the sun is sinking
We cease at length to roam,
For then we both are thinking
There's no place quite like home.

Yet when again come burdens
And little things annoy,
I'm sure to find refreshment
In an outing with my boy.

A Lesson From The Birds.

The birds which fly up in the sky
And many miles away
Where'er they roam yet find a home
When fades the light of day.

When once again, for birds and men,
The darksome night is done
With gay dispute and glad salute
They greet the morning sun.

In shady lane, or sunny plain,
They are a merry throng
Who, free from care, still fill the air
With music all day long.

Whene'er I see, up in a tree,
These merry little birds,
Awakens thought, too deep, I wot,
For shallow, idle words,

And then I sigh, I scarce know why,
For something I know not,
For joy more sweet than I can meet
In all that men have taught.

If man would learn and could discern
The lesson nature teaches,
All highest bliss he could not miss
For not a bird but preaches.

But foolish man, do all they can,
The birds cannot make wise
Nor make him see this world may be
A heaven of smaller size.

When the Circus Came to Town.

Said neighbor Smith to neighbor Brown,
"I'd ruthr like to know
Ef all the people in the town
Air goin' to the show."

"Said Deacon B, says he to me,
'The children begged me so
Jest onct to take them there to see—
I'm goin to the show.' "

"Said Mrs. C, 'I do not care
Fur circuses, but, oh,
To see the beasts! I do declare
I'm going to the show.' "

"Said Elder E, says he to me,
'I, too, must surely go.
To watch my strayin' flock, you see,
I'm goin' to the show.' "

The children said, "With all respect,
We'd like to have you know
To circuses we don't object;
We like to see a show."

A Tangle.

My young neighbor has a sister
And she heard that I had kissed her
In the gloaming.
"By the stars that shine above her,
Will your fancies, now you love her,
Cease their roaming?"

Then I rose and swore by heaven—
By the first and by all seven—
I adored her:
And to help me win her sister—
Here I stooped and gently kissed her—
I implored her.

Then my thoughts began a wrangle,
Weaving heartstrings in a tangle
Round each sister,
For I loved them both so dearly!
Ah, I saw it all too clearly
When I kissed her.

A Lament.

Ah, listen, friends, my tale is sad
My troubles your's surpass
For now, I see, to the end I'll be
The baby of the class.

In vain I strive to speak and move
As does no little lass,
Then comes the sting—the cruel fling—
"Dear baby of the class."

One day I was as dignified
As priests should be at mass
And then, in glee, they cried, "O see
The baby of the class!"

What though my teachers smile and say,
"My dear, you always pass"?
Whate'er the gains the fact remains—
The baby of the class.

They pat my head and call me "bright,"
"A prodigy"——Alas!
As well be dead as hear it said,—
"The baby of the class"

Ah, well I know, my days of youth
In joy would quickly pass
If I were not—O piteous lot!
The baby of the class.

Our school boasts many a likely lad
And each one has his lass
But all, you see, just ignore me,
The baby of the class.

Today, forget, for once forget
The baby of the class,
And grant my plea that I may be—
Just a common school girl!

At Santiago.

We long had chased the vessels
Of the haughty Spaniard's fleet,
For they did not dare to fight us
And they beat us in retreat.

We built our ships for battle;
We were eager for the fray;
But like phantom ships they vanished;
They were built to run away.

At length within the harbor—
In behind Soroco's guns—
Rushed, in utter consternation,
All their ships of many tons.

We waited on the ocean,
And they skulked within the bay;
We had come, you see, to meet them
And were sorry for delay.

We kept our guns in order
And our fires burning bright,
And we watched throughout the daytime
And we watched throughout the night.

We talked of Cuba's martyrs
And our friends upon the Maine,
And we vowed that we'd avenge them
On the sailor boys of Spain.

We heard, across the waters,
Faint and far, the Cuban's cry
In the restless ocean's murmur
And the night-wind's moan and sigh.

What if the war were ended—
And this our only fear—
E'er the foe we long had sought for
Could be tempted to appear?

This morning came the battle—
No! their flight and our pursuit—
When the guns all spoke in thunder,
Clear and loud and resolute.

The flash and roar of battle!
Oh, it was an awful sight
When the ships of Spain all perished
In the midst of headlong flight!

Tonight the staunchest vessels
Of the haughty Spaniard's fleet,
On the coast, lie dead and silent,
With a fog for winding sheet.

Those wrecks along the coast line
Are all black and still and grim,
And the cup old Spain is drinking
Has been filled up to the brim!

The Lord who rules the nations
Holds that cup for her today:
It is he who bids her drink it
To her terror and dismay.

"Keep Pegging Away."

Sometimes when the thought of the work still before us
Is a spectre by night and a burden by day
The words of "Old Abe" would quite quickly restore us
If we'd honestly heed his, "Keep pegging away."

The care of a day—we will surely live through it
If we'll trust in the right, as we ought, as we may;
The task of a day—we can easily do it
If we'll work with a will and keep pegging away.

The tasks of a lifetime—each thinking man knows it—
Will not all come upon us in any one day;
The cares of a lifetime—the past clearly shows it—
We'll endure if we'll only keep pegging away.

My Wild-wood Friends.

I'm oft in a world of marvels
  Since I've taught mine eyes to see,
And oft I hear in the wild-wood
  Tales as strange as strange can be.

O I love, alone, to wander
  And with eyes and ears to pry
Deep down into the mysteries
  To be found beneath the sky.

Each flower and bird and squirrel
  Has hopes and fears as have we
And each, for the love I bear him
  Has told all his tale to me.

The flowers talk of the sunshine,
  The dew, the breeze, and the storm
And then show for my inspection
  Some rich color or rare form.

The birds are garrulous neighbors
  Oft singing an hour through
Of nests, of fruits, and of berries.
  And of what a bird can do.

The squirrels are fond of chatting
  Of nuts, of trees, and of seeds
And of how 'tis well in autumn
  To provide for winter's needs.

And then one dear little fellow—
  And no doubt he thinks he's wise—
Will hold up a nut and crack it
  To secure the hidden prize.

The birds oft give me a lesson—
The little venturesome things—
Of how the earth can not hold one
Who's blessed with a pair of wings.

The flowers, arrayed in beauty,
But without a hint of pride,
Still tell, as of old, the lowly
To trust the Lord to provide.

Ah, yes, 'tis a world of marvels
For those who can see and hear,
And the sights and sounds of nature
Are lessons of trust and cheer.

The companionship she brings us
Has a charm that never ends,
If we'll meet our wild-wood neighbors
As a true man meets his friends.

The Parson's Monologue.

Dear wife, my heart is full tonight
Of gratitude and praise:
"The Lord is good to all mankind,
And wondrous are his ways."

I did not think our people cared
How hard we toiled and prayed:
The years were flying fast, dear wife,
Ah, me—I was afraid,—

Afraid to work and wait and trust
The God we long had served.
The many blessings of this day
Are more than I deserved.

'Twas surely for your sake, true wife—
No, let me have my say—
When doubts increased and fears oppressed,
You taught me how to pray.

Today your faith is proven true—
O wondrous is God's grace!
"Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face."

Yes, sing that good old hymn tonight
With voice, serene and strong.
The Lord is good, is kind and good,
And I have done him wrong.

How I've misjudged our people too,
Misunderstood their way;
But should I live to three-score ten
I'll not forget this day.

Now John can go to college, wife—
O praise the Lord for that!
He'll walk the old familiar halls
And sit where I once sat:

He'll hear the old melodious bell
Which marks the passing hours;
He'll dream his dream, and poverty
Will not restrict his powers.

And you, dear wife, look young tonight,
As in your girlhood days,
When I rejoiced in your strong faith
And all your helpful ways.

I bless the Lord for friends tonight—
I know I'm thankful too—
But most of all,—yes, come, dear one,—
I bless the Lord for you.

"Sunshine" Again.

Dorothy singeth,
Dorothy swingeth,
'Neath my window this calm summer day,
And the gay
Roundelay
Which she singeth,
While she swingeth,
Is so full of the gladness of youth,
The joy of life's morning, forsooth,
That it filleth my heart with delight
And putteth forebodings to flight.

Still she singeth,
Still she swingeth,
And I say, with a smile, "Little miss,
Tell me this,
Do you miss,
In your playing,
The delaying
Of the joys other seasons will bring—
The winter, the autumn, the spring?
Do you dwell with regret on past sorrow,
Or fear the heartaches of tomorrow?"

So I perplex her—
Questioning, vex her—
Till the hint of a frown's on her brow.
"Tell me now,
Tell me how,
With your singing,
And your swinging,
You can chase every cloud from the sky—
Never grumble nor growl, as do I?"
Then she said—and her face was demure—
"Today we can play, I am sure."

Wise little teacher,
Dear little preacher,
'Neath my window now singing again:
All we men,
In the ken
Of our learning,
And the yearning
Of our hearts for life's joys, never yet
With wiser instruction have met,—
"Do not dwell with regret on past sorrow
Nor fear the heartaches of tomorrow
When the place and the day
Bid you play."

Vacation Days.

On the cloudless days when the sun shines bright
And the earth is bathed in a flood of light,
Then the meadows call—and the woods call too—
"Leave your work and come! Come to us! O, do!"

On the stormy days when the skies are gray
From my home afar I no longer stray,
But I rest and muse and my fancy free
Brings the joys of meadows and woods to me.

I love each gift the seasons bring:
The winter's storm and cold,
The freshness of the balmy spring,
The autumn's red and gold,
The summer's glow when heat is king
And growth is manifold;
With changes fair the year is rife—
"Variety's the spice of life."

Postscript.

As one who lays aside his pen
Yet turns and takes it once again
And adds a postscript to a letter,
Expressing thus a wish forgot
Or writing once again some thought
He thinks he can express still better,

So, though I'd written all the rhymes,
The jingling sounds and solemn chimes,
Which in my mind had jarred and blended,
My little book I'd still hold back
And in a single word I'd pack
A thousand thoughts e'er all was ended.

A world above, without, within,
With all its melody and din,
Is seeking still complete expression;
While hope and faith and love are strong,
And fain would make in some new song
A full and free and glad confession.

My little book of life can be
From all time's limitations free
And I can write the last word—never!
Eternity doth onward roll;
Eternity is in my soul;
I'll live and learn and love forever!

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